

The Jesus Agenda: Redeeming Families One Father at a Time

Fathers play a vital role in the development of a child as well as in God's redemptive plan for the lives of their children. Fathers provide discipline instruction, protection and provision, and unconditional love and forgiveness—all practical and redemptive roles that shape the lives of their children.

The role of fathers is easily traced throughout Scripture. Among others, the pattern of God's redemptive work in history is revealed in the stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These fathers were imperfect and ordinary men that shaped the lives and faith of the next generation.

The gospel of Matthew records a listing of the families that God worked through from Abraham to Jesus. From the very beginning, the family has been the primary building block of societies, nations, and civilizations. What happens at the nuclear level of the family shapes communities, cities, states, nations, and the world.

The Jesus Agenda was announced in the first sermon Jesus ever preached and served as a blueprint for his 36-month ministry. Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and had anointed him to accomplish five essential activities: preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the captives, recovery of sight for the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He lived a life of obedience to His father and sacrificed His life to redeem broken humanity. The poor would not have to be poor anymore, those in bondage would be set free, those with sickness would be healed, the oppressed people would find liberty, and God's favor would become a reality.

So do fathers play a part in the Jesus agenda? My father did for me.

By the end of this summer, my father will be 88 years old. A native of Corpus Christi, Texas, he picked cotton as a boy in West Texas earning 75 cents for a 100-pound bag a day. He dropped out of school in the 7th grade and joined the United States Marine Corps when he was 17.

After tours in Japan and China, he received an honorable discharge as a World War II veteran in 1948 and returned to Corpus Christi to earn his GED diploma and attend Del Mar College to study accounting, English, and sales. He married my mother, Gloria Garcia, in 1952 and had a successful career in sales, law enforcement, and private business with my mother.

My story of redemption actually began with my father's mother, Francisca Rodriguez Reyes, who came to faith under the ministry of Rev. Edward P. Gonzalez. Her faith had an obvious influence on my father. By the time I was born, both of my parents were active members in a local Baptist church.

Dad came to faith in Christ under the ministry of Dr. Ignacio E. Gonzalez, his pastor in Corpus Christi. So, you could say I was raised by Marine Corps principles and the Bible.

Each Sunday after lunch, dad would gather my two brothers and me in the living room and read a Bible story to us. But beyond that, my dad assumed his primary responsibility to teach and train us in the ways of the Lord and took us to church to augment his efforts.

The gospel that came to us through the witness of my paternal grandmother and my father planted the seeds of God's redemptive work in my life.

The gospel was good news to the Reyes family, a poor migrant family in West Texas; the gospel was healing news for us too. The gospel gave us freedom from a life with no hope, liberty

over oppressive and difficult circumstances, and the favor of the Lord.

I always think of my dad and remember his discipline, his guidance, his presence, his love, his provision, and his effort to point me to Jesus and a redeemed life. I recall his support and encouragement when I answered a call to vocational ministry at the age of 15. Over time, both of my brothers, Gus and Fred, also answered a call to vocational ministry. We each married beautiful, intelligent, Christian women and are blessed with our own families.

In a critical moment when I sought dad's advice as a young minister he said, "All I expect is that you love the Lord and serve Him all the days of your life." Jesus worked his agenda and implemented his redemptive plan through my dad, a U.S. Marine, deacon, law enforcement officer, and businessman. He was the primary agent of redemption in my life. Obedience became a habit, and honor became my gift to him.

Fathers, how are you shaping the Jesus Agenda and God's redemptive plan for your children?

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